Inmate No. 3617: Inside Yoon's new digs at Seoul jail

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The former president will be staying in a solitary room and will no longer enjoy protection by the Presidential Security Service

Former President Yoon Suk-yeol boards a Korea Correctional Service van following a judge's review of a warrant for his detention at the Seoul Central District Court on July 9, 2025. (pool photo)

South Korea's disgraced former president, Yoon Suk-yeol, began his second stint in prison on Thursday. Unlike during his first period in the clink in January, Yoon is no longer the sitting president, meaning that he no longer enjoys the protection of a Presidential Security Service detail and will live in conditions no different from those of other suspects and offenders.

Yoon must now prepare for the special counsel probe's investigation and his insurrection trial while staying within a solitary confinement cell that is barely 10 square meters.

At 9:01 pm on Wednesday, Yoon completed his pre-detention interrogation at the Seoul Central District Court and was transferred to the Seoul Detention Center in Uiwang, Gyeonggi Province, for holding while awaiting the judge's decision on his detention warrant.

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The Seoul Detention Center is where Yoon was detained following his initial arrest earlier this year, on Jan. 15. The detention warrant for Yoon was issued at around 2:07 am on Thursday, which started the warrant's execution process.

"At around 3 am, the detention warrant was executed by correctional officers at the Seoul Detention Center under the command of the special counsel. Yoon and Kim Keon-hee's legal team was notified of the arrest by mail," Park Ji-yeong, an assistant prosecutor on the special counsel team, said during a briefing held later in the day.

Yoon followed the same procedures as any other person admitted to the detention center on Wednesday. He received an examination to check for and confiscate restricted items and then another physical examination that took note of his height, weight and other features. After changing into the khaki uniform given to inmates, Yoon took mugshots for his official record. Following the admission process, he was given the inmate number 3617.

The former president will be placed in the same hall as his fellow inmates but will be in a 9.9-square-meter solitary confinement cell. The room he was assigned this time around is slightly smaller than the one he stayed in in January. The room he is occupying is said to have blankets, a television, a foldable table, a sink, a toilet and an electric fan attached to the wall. The fan can be turned on for 24 hours but will turn off for 10 minutes after being on for 50, for fear of potential fire hazards. The detention center has agreed to allow Yoon to follow a different schedule from other inmates when it comes to exercising or using the shower.

Yoon is to receive the same meals as the other prisoners. Wednesday's menu at the jail consisted of a small cheese bread, steamed potatoes with salt, mixed nuts, and flavored milk for breakfast, fermented soybean paste stew, steamed egg, spicy cucumber and onion salad, and kimchi for lunch, and bean sprout soup, spicy bulgogi, peppers and ssamjang paste, and kimchi for dinner. The meal stipend for each prisoner is around 5,201 won, meaning that each meal costs around 1,733 won.

The biggest change since January is that Yoon is no longer being guarded by presidential security. During his first detention, the secret service guarded the then-president by surveilling the detention center's outer gates and having agents reside in accommodations located near those gates in case of an emergency. However, the former president was not provided with such services when he was admitted to prison on Wednesday. While he will not receive the same level of security as he did in January, Yoon will receive similar treatment by being escorted by Seoul Detention Center guards.

By Kang Jae-gu, staff reporter; Park Chan-hee, staff reporter; Kwak Jin-san, staff reporter

Please direct questions or comments to [english@hani.co.kr]

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